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UNITED STATES MISSION TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

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46TH SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

S T A T E M E N T

BY

AMBASSADOR ARMANDO VALLADARES

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE TO THE
UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

ON

ITEM 12

February 27, 1990

ENGLISH TEXT

(Check Against Delivery)

Sri Lanka has been beset by brutal terrorist insurgencies--some have compared the SVP to Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge or the Shining Path of Peru--that have led to a tragic loss of life. There have been human rights abuses by all parties to the dispute, including government forces. We note the Sri Lankan Government's many efforts to resolve normalcy through conciliation and consensus. Plainly, a democratically-elected government has the right to protect itself from those who would overthrow it by force. Nevertheless, those charged with enforcing the law have a special obligation to obey it. We welcome, too, the Government of Sri Lanka'a recent decision to lift certain parts of the emergency regulations. Sri Lanka, as a democracy, should fully recognize the importance of maintaining the rule of law and ensure that the law is applied equitably to all citizens. We urge Sri Lanka to continue taking measures to improve the human rights situation there as the country moves towards normalcy and peace.

The United States follows the situation in East Timor closely. We continue to put high priority on human rights throughout Indonesia, including in East Timor. We welcome and encourage further broadening of access to the province. We support discussions between the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal under the offices of the United Nations Secretary General as the best way to resolve the two nations' differences over East Timor.

Some observers of the situation in Myanmar express the view that respect for human rights there improved in 1989 because there were no killings of unarmed demonstrators, as had occurred in 1988. That view is flawed: there were no demonstrators to shoot in 1989 because the martial law edict in effect prohibits the public gathering of more than five people. Moreover, there are credible reports that torture and summary executions of political detainees were commonplace in Myanmar in 1989. If the Myanmar Government sincerely desires to demonstrate that the May 27 elections will be free and fair, let it invite objective outside observers to monitor those elections and liberate the opposition leaders and activists to participate in the process.

One of the most repressive regimes continues to be the North Korean Government. Individual rights are completely subordinated to the prerogatives of the Party and the State. Moreover, the Government of North Korea imprisons persons who fail to conform to the dictates of the State, and often exiles them along with their families to remote villages.